

Priority #4: Education to Promote Forest Land Conservation

Project Applicant:

Virginia Department of Forestry

Project Lead:

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Abstract of Project Proposal:

The growing disconnection between people and land points out a need to educate both adults and youth about the importance of forests. Forest landownership continues to change, and many new landowners are less likely to understand the economic and ecological values of working forests. The lack of outdoor experiences among today's children is well documented. Without positive experiences in the natural world, youth may be less likely to value forests, placing the future of many interconnected natural resources in jeopardy. Teaching youth and adults about land conservation is a key to the present and future stewardship of these resources. With a wide network of field staff across the state, the Virginia Department of Forestry has opportunities to educate citizens of all ages about the value of working forest landscapes.

This proposal addresses educational and outreach goals and objectives in the 2007 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* (VOP) by developing outreach objectives related to the conservation of working forest landscapes. It also addresses the Department of Forestry's goals of conserving the forest land base and protecting, promoting, and enhancing forested watersheds. This project relates to the national themes prioritized for this grant as follows:

Implementing Green Infrastructure	Conserve Working Forest Landscapes	Enhance Benefits Associated with Trees and Forests	Forest Health	Water Quality and Quantity
Initiatives in Virginia				
The video to be developed will be a tool for informing and training many audiences, including community leaders and decision makers and landowners.	Educational strategies will target landowners with working forest landscapes; community leaders and other citizens who help to make decisions about land use; and youth (Virginia's future landowners).	Programs and materials will educate many citizens about the benefits of forested landscapes and ways they can maintain and enhance them.	Programs and materials will address the importance of keeping forests healthy in order to maintain their optimal ecosystem values.	Educational efforts will address the links between forests and water, and the importance of forests in protecting water quality.

Partnering Agencies and Groups/Individuals:

- ✓ State agencies - Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- ✓ Regional organizations – Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
- ✓ Nonprofit organizations – Virginia Parks and Recreation Association

Project Location: Commonwealth of Virginia (statewide)

Expected Completion: October 2009

Total Federal Funding Request: \$36,000

Total Proposed Budget (including match): \$72,000
..... External funds/in-kind support leveraged for the project

Project Description: Education to Promote Forest Land Conservation

Product #1. Forest Conservation / Green Infrastructure Video

An up-to-date video will be created, based on a green infrastructure video completed by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. Footage will be added and edited to create a product that is relevant statewide and includes a specific focus on forest land conservation. The video will be debuted at the 2008 Virginia Recreation and Parks Society and Governor's Conference on Trails and Greenways. Copies will then be distributed to VDOF, DCR, and other natural resource staff for their use in local educational programs for landowners, planners, elected officials, and citizen groups.

Product # 2. Educational tool kits, training and display materials for VDOF field staff

Materials and training will assist foresters and technicians in providing high-quality educational experiences to youth. Hands-on Forestry training focuses on the role of forests and the importance of conserving forest land. It includes training, lesson plans, Standards of Learning correlations, and "tool boxes" with materials to facilitate hands-on learning. Many of the lessons can be adapted for adult audiences.

To further target adult audiences, high-quality, durable, captioned picture sets will be developed around several themes supporting forest land conservation and the services provided by VDOF. These picture sets are for use on traditional display panels and are easily stored and shipped. They will be available for use statewide at public events, for high visibility of VDOF's conservation message.

Product # 3. Scholarship Awards for Attendees of 2008 Virginia Recreation and Parks Society and Governor's Conference on Trails and Greenways

Scholarships will enable smaller parks and recreation departments, nonprofit organizations, citizen volunteers and students to attend the conference. Green infrastructure and land conservation will be major topics at this professional development event. Many of the attendees work closely with green infrastructure projects in their localities and will benefit from additional training.

Evaluation Criteria

National and Regional Relevance

Green landscapes are critically important to water and air quality, biodiversity, and even human health and quality of life. Education is a major step in convincing Virginia's citizens, planners, and lawmakers of the benefits of conserving forest land and other green spaces.

Prioritization

The Virginia Department of Forestry has a major goal of conserving the forest land base. Green infrastructure initiatives, such as forest land conservation, along with related education has been identified in the 2007

Virginia Outdoors Plan as a priority area of implementation in the state.

Meaningful Scale

By developing a product that can be used statewide, and by training and equipping statewide staff who take programs back to their localities, this proposal allows for dissemination of the land conservation message throughout Virginia.

Collaboration

This grant project brings partners from several agencies together to address a common goal. Collaborating on grant-funded projects such as this one eliminates duplication of effort and ensures contact with wider audiences.

Outcomes

1. A new video will be created that is relevant statewide and includes a specific focus on forest land conservation. The video will be distributed to VDOF, DCR, and other natural resource staff for their use in local educational programs for landowners, planners, elected officials, and citizen groups.
2. Training and materials will equip at least 50 VDOF staff for their role as educators in the coming year. These staff will in turn conduct educational programs to reach citizens in communities across the state.
3. A quality library of display picture sets will be produced and available to VDOF staff statewide for use at events.
4. Fifty representatives of small parks and recreation departments, nonprofit organizations, citizen volunteers and students will attend the Trails and Greenways Conference.

Technology

Not applicable

Integrated Delivery

The Virginia Departments of Forestry and Conservation & Recreation will partner together to complete this project, ensuring that efforts are not duplicated. Programs will be delivered at the local level by agency staff.

Leverage

State agency staff time will be used as an in kind match to leverage funds for the project.

Influence Positive Change

This project will increase awareness of the need for land conservation and will provide knowledge resources that increase citizens' ability to conserve the forest land base. By educating youth, this project also invests in the future of Virginia's forests.

Timeliness

With over 26,000 acres of forest land lost in the past year, immediate implementation of land conservation efforts is critical. This proposal also fits into the time frame established for 2007 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* goals.